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THE

OPTIMIST:

OR

SATIRE in GOOD-HUMOUR.

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AUG

THE OPTIMIST, &c.

WHY ſhould the man, whoſe butter'd bread
By cleanly hands each morn is ſpread;
Who ſees much more than he is able
To ſtuff, at dinner on his table;
Whoſe ſupper is a conſtant treat,
That gluttony might wiſh to eat;
Who nightly ſome fair Houry chooſes,
Nor finds the party that refuſes?
Why ſhould ſuch man in furious rhymes,
Attack the follies of the times?
In theſe, as well as thoſe before 'em,
Are faults—but pray who ſuffer for 'em?
Not the rich ſatiriſts, who brandiſh
Their ſilver pen o'er ſilver ſtandiſh;
Who need not to the Muſe appeal,
To grant her warrant for a meal.

~~Let thoſe exclaim againſt the good,~~
Who ſmart beneath oppreſſion's load;
Let thoſe 'gainſt luxury inveigh,
Who ſcarcely get a meal a day;
But why ſhould I purſue the theme?
I ſwim triumphant down the ſtream,
And turning a deaf ear to reaſon,
Enjoy the follies of the ſeaſon;
Methinks, myſelf, 'twere full as good in,
To hold my tongue, and eat my pudding.
Yet write I muſt—this teeming brain
No longer can itſelf contain,
Nor ſhall I reſt my troubled head,
Till it be ſafely brought to bed.
Beſides, who wou'd not write? What nature
Exiſts ſo indiſpoſed to ſatire,
As not to waſte a little rage,
On this abominable age?
When learning, honeſty, and merit,
Love of our country, public ſpirit,
Virtue, ſobriety, frugality,
Religion, chaſtity, morality,
The precious value of our time,
And divers other words that rhyme,
Are baniſh'd from the earth—what then?
Will writing bring 'em back again?

Haply theſe gentry once appear'd,
Ere maſter JOVEY had a beard,

When

When JUNO was a little virgin,
Nor felt that certain ſomething urging;
Ere VULCAN of his rib was jealous,
Who for the ſpear forſook the bellows;
Ere IRIS with a cloud bedeck'd her,
To ſerve the heav'nly ſynods nectar:
In ſhort, ere churches had a ſteeple,
Or this ſame world was fill'd with people;
For when good folk were taught to pray,
That all their faults might paſs away,
They thought it was a matter civil,
Firſt to commit a little evil.
Thus ſin came; and from this beginning,
So great has been th' increaſe of ſinning,
That the whole cargo long ago,
Shipp'd off, and are forgotten now.
Let none with fictions heat their fancies,
Leſs probable than French romances;
That now indeed all things are evil,
Done by mandamus of the DEVIL;
But that there was a time of old,
When men were form'd of different mould;
When all was good, and all was fair,
When peccadillo's light as air,
Such as adult'ry, murder, rapine,
Wou'd ſet th' aſtoniſh'd world a gaping.
Indeed theſe times were they requir'd
To find in ſtory, they'd be tir'd;

Search

Search all the records of the clan
That liv'd 'twixt BEERSHEBA and DAN:
Let GRÆCIA's ſenſe, and ÆGYPT's knowledge,
CHALDEA's aſtrologic college,
And CHINA's annals of old times,
Point out the periods and the climes,
When Theft, Ingratitude, Fraud, Treaſon,
Revenge and Luſt were out of ſeaſon.
Ev'n maſter JOVE, arrived at grown-age,
Kick'd off the virtues of his nonage;
And men have follow'd the example
Of his, their parent's, goodly ſample:
Ages before theſe times have trod
Hell's highway to a beaten road;
And ſinn'd, as uſual, without ceaſing,
Neither abating nor encreaſing;
Unleſs the current of the times
Set more to follies than to crimes.

Here, did I metaphyſics love,
'Twoud not be difficult to prove,
A little evil neceſſary,
Among the cauſes ſecondary.
And Optimiſts, this once confeſs'd,
Will urge that all is for the beſt;
And ſhew, that in a partial light,
Things ſeeming wrong, may yet be right.

When fair ALMERIA ſtrives to paint
A ſign, where heav'n had form'd a ſaint;

And where we fear'd to meet a VENUS,
Kindly obtrudes a maſk between us;
When CAROLINE a bloom diſcloſes,
Which Nature never gave to roſes,
Yet ſhuns its beauties to impart,
And emulates her ſiſter's art;
Say, is not this a deed deſign'd,
In pure compaſſion to mankind?

When all her former beauties grace
The fair remains of GROSVENOR's face,
And artificial charms inſpire
The wonted glance of ſoft deſire;
Say, when ſhe ogles all ſhe ſees,
Why reprehend her wiſh to pleaſe?

If gayeſt SAY and SELE advance,
The foremoſt in the ſprightly dance;
If ſhe a load of finery bear,
That prudent girls might bluſh to wear;
Shall Scandal exerciſe her tongue?
Who ſtrength and ſpirits have, are young.

When GEORGEY, with unmeaning air
Gallops the ſtreet, as people ſtare;
And while his dangling arms hang idle,
Leaves to the beaſt the care o'th' bridle,
Does not each day's experience ſhew,
He truſts the wiſer of the two?

When he, committed to whoſe truſt is
This trading city's ſhop of juſtice,

In pity to their nightly labours,
O'erlook'd the conduct of his neighbours;
But kenn'd from far, with eagle's eye,
That HAYES kept evil company:
'Twas not, that theſe had duly paid
The tribute of their little trade,
While CHARLOTTE, truſting in her purſe,
Refus'd the needful to diſburſe;
O! be ſuch groundleſs ſcandal blotted
From the fair paper it has ſpotted!
No:—he diſcern'd that CHARLOTTE's fair
Languiſh'd for eaſe, had trade to ſpare;
And therefore he to BRIDEWELL ſent 'em,
With four days Sabbath to content 'em;
While t'other more unlucky neſt,
Wiſh'd for encreaſe of trade, not reſt.

When CHARLES, whoſe youth was ſeen to ſhower
Its bloſſoms, like an April flower,
Exuberant before its time,
Yet glorying in its fulleſt prime;
Whoſe riper years were form'd to raiſe
At once our wonder and our praiſe;
With ſoul enlarg'd, enlighten'd mind,
Prompt eloquence, wit unconfin'd,
Forſaking glory's opening ſource,
Dwelt on the dice-box, and the courſe;
And form'd his country to adorn,
Became the object of its ſcorn;

He ſaw upon repeated trial
(Match if you can his ſelf-denial)
That huſwife Nature's frugal plan,
Meant not a perfect ſtate for man;
He ſaw, and ſcorn'd to give offence
By well-deſerv'd pre-eminence:
Debas'd the luſtre of his fame,
And ſunk into a vulgar name.

When the aſpiring city lady,
Fine as a pewter'd Queen on May-day,
Shews to malevolent beholders,
The coſt of princes on her ſhoulders;
What then? By her profuſion fed,
A thouſand hands earn daily bread;
And who by other's folly lives,
May juſtly ſuffer for his wives.

When BOSWELL—in that ſacred name
Can ſatire find a theme to blame?
Her perfect form, her gen'rous mind,
With mildeſt purity combin'd,
Might well diſarm its keeneſt rage,
And blanch the blackneſs of the age:
When ſhe receives the coxcomb's leer,
Nor ſtarts tho' MOLYNEUX be near;
She ſhews, againſt her inclination,
That prudence muſt comply with faſhion.

When all the nobles of the land,
Collected in a midnight band,

With

With well-digeſted obſervations,
Talk of long odds, inſtead of nations;
And wiſely ſtealing from the cares
Of dry, political affairs,
With fix'd attention ſeek for fame in
That preſent noble bus'neſs, gaming.
O make not of their toils a jeſt!
The path they've choſen is the beſt.
The real welfare of a nation
Ariſes from quick circulation,
And ſurely 'tis the quickeſt trade,
Where thouſands in an hour are paid.

When college pedants, ere it ope,
Check the gay bloom of ſprightly hope;
When WETHEREL, SCOTT, and twenty others
Like as one puppy to its brothers,
(Methinks, could I put blind in metre,
'Twould make my puppies much completer)
Nip with cold ſaws, and maxims crude,
The ſeeds of virtue in the bud:
Villains, a ſatiriſt might cry,
Ye ſtrive to cheriſh infamy,
And teach the youth, to feeling callous,
To merit, tho' not reach the gallows;
Not ſo ſay I——their wiſdom ſhines
Alike in this and all deſigns;
From tried experience, well they know
Th' advantage of a cringing bow;

While

While this in chair hiſtoric fattens,
That in ſnug ſtall ſupinely battens;
And SOLOMON ſaid long ago,
Bend pliant twigs as they ſhould grow:
Then wherefore not improve the plan,
And ere the beard proclaim the man,
Complete a liberal education,
By rooting out each liberal paſſion?

But that I fear'd to give a handle
To every tongue that deals in ſcandal,
And raiſe intolerable clatter,
I ſhould diſcuſs a weightier matter,
Shew that the blackeſt of all crimes,
Turn on the temper of the times;
And prove that, better underſtood,
They formerly conduc'd to good.
Who thinks himſelf oblig'd to vapour,
Becauſe he lights his neighbour's taper?
Indeed he gives his neighbour light,
But his own fire remains as bright;
So moſt men have a certain treaſure,
Which knows no boundaries or meaſure;
Apply it to perpetual uſe,
'Tis always like the widow's cruiſe;
Nay, further yet, its ſole enjoyment
Lies in the action of employment
(For 'tis a being ſenſitive,
That kind of property term'd live)

And yet we ſtrive with bolts, with guard,
This treaſure from all hands to ward;
Make it the buſineſs of our lives,
To keep our neighbours from our wives;
And ſhould the fair ones chance to ſtumble
(Women like men are prone to tumble)
Think we've a right to rend the ſky,
Eternal Wiſdom to defy,
To fill the earth, the ſeas, the air,
With execrations of deſpair,
Vow vengeance on the wretch miſdoing,
As well as him who caus'd her ruin;
Whereas we ought to thank our neighbour,
For aiding in our nightly labour.

And this from wiſer obſervation
Full many a leſs poliſh'd nation
(Where cuckoldom a better trade is,
And more indulgence giv'n to ladies)
Has done. Friend PRIOR nämes the ſtrand,
On which when faſting ſailors land,
The natives bring their women to 'em,
And thank them for the good they do 'em;
Well knowing, not to mince the matter,
Woman to be of rav'nous nature.
But theſe are people known to no man——
Weigh then the manners of the Roman;
CATO, whom Latin bards and Greek
Have prais'd, till language is too weak,

In mere compaſſion to his friend,
Begg'd leave his wife to recommend,
Knowing HORTENSIUS much to need her,
As being an eſpecial breeder;
Who having ſoothi'd his amorous pain,
Return'd the fair one back again.

AUGUSTUS, of that name the elder,
Took his friend's wife with Hans in Kelder;
And well content with what he'd gotten,
Regarded not who ſet the pot on.

SULPICIUS too, in lines befitting
The doleful cauſe, to TULLY written,
Obſerves that hapleſs TULLIA tried
Three vig'rous huſbands ere ſhe died *.

Then why ſhould we refuſe our vittle,
If ſome warm nymph think one too little?
In theſe degenerate days, ſure no man
Deems himſelf ſtouter than a Roman.
Why ſhould we execrate her name,
And blaſt the fair-one's opening fame;
Leave her, tho' gen'rous, tender, wife,
A mark for ideots to deſpiſe;
For one moſt natural offence,
Be deaf to heart-felt penitence;
And think an age of ſorrow will not
Atone an injury we feel not?

* Vide OLIVET's Cicero, tom. vii. p. 109.

Ill-fated BUNBURY! thy name
Shall be thy country's laſting ſhame!
Shalt thou, for one falſe ſtep alone
(Thy provocations known to none)
Shalt thou, enlighten'd, generous, kind,
The model of a female mind;
Shalt thou, enrich'd with ev'ry grace,
Fit ſcyon of thy royal race;
Shalt thou, and none defend thee, bear
The unimpaſſion'd madam's ſneer,
Who free from one offence alone,
Sticks not at any crime but one?
And ſhall a life to ſorrows given,
And ev'ry virtue under Heav'n,
Which ſelf-renouncing fathers teach,
Which hermits tried, but cou'd not reach;
Shall not this life at length aſſuage
Th' envenom'd rancour of the age,
And give, yet purer from the ſtain,
Its BUNBURY to fame again?

My worthy friends (I ſpeak to thoſe
Who feel a ſomething on their brows)
If rage your generous ſouls inflame,
Be not deluded by a name,
Nor loſe yourſelves in fooliſh paſſion,
Becauſe warm livers are in faſhion.
Why ſhou'd you make a fuſs about it?
You're as well with it, as without it.

Ne'er

Ne'er was that thing, which crime we call,
Whoſe conſequences are ſo ſmall.
From your abundance, hurts it you,
If others glean a little too?
'Tis time in juſtice to take huff,
When medlers have not left enough.

Here my deſign might travel further,
And prove that there's no harm in murther,
But tis too much for young beginners,
And haply might encourage ſinners;
Moreover when I talk'd of hemp or
Gallows, perchance 'twould ſpoil my temper,
And theſe lines, without bile or tumour,
Are penn'd by Satire in Good-Humour. 336

FINIS.

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